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WOW REVIEW

READING ACROSS CULTURES
VOLUME XV, ISSUE 4

Summer 2023
Global Perspectives on Food

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**WOW Review: Volume XV Issue 4
Summer 2023
Global Perspectives on Food**

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Introduction and Editor's Note

*When I think how far the onion has traveled
just to enter my stew today, I could kneel and praise
all small forgotten miracles...*

This excerpt from the poem “The Traveling Onion” by Naomi Shihab Nye (1995) captures the nuances of this issue of books that provide global perspectives on food. In one way or another these books reference how food and family cooking practices travel across time and distance, creating and sharing small miracles that have kept people together for generations.

Some of the books in this collection highlight the role of food in creating or maintaining family traditions. For example, *Maribel’s Year* reflects on family practices around food as Maribel moves from the Philippines to a new home. Maribel and her father remember pinakbet, Papa’s favorite dish, avocado shakes in the summer, buko ‘uice around September, and dried mangoes and tamarinds from Lolo’s farm. Similarly, *Granny’s Kitchen* describes Shelly-Ann’s journey in learning how to cook Jamaican dishes as she moves from not feeling very comfortable about her cooking skills to trusting herself to prepare a delicious Jamaican breakfast. Offering a broader and deeper look into how fry bread has shaped family traditions in Indigenous families and communities, *Fry Bread* invites readers to think about food as shape, sound, color, flavor... but also time, history, place, and nation... because “FRY BREAD IS EVERYTHING.”

Other titles explore the power of food to bring cultures together and to expand identities. When Korean American Roy from *Chef Roy Choi and the Street Food Remix* finished high school, he realized that he always felt at home in the kitchen. But he wasn’t interested in feeding movie stars in fancy places; instead, he wanted to reach people who walk the streets and worn-out neighborhoods of L.A. He fed them Korean Mexican mixed dishes cooked with sohn-maash and love. Also representing the Asian American communities, *Measuring Up* tells the story of Cici who recently moved to Seattle from Taiwan. Cici misses her A-ma and enters a cooking contest in hopes to win the grand prize that will allow A-ma to visit her. Unsure about how to cook a range of American food, Cici pulls from her knowledge about Taiwanese cuisine and creates a delicious lavender-inspired dish. Also set in the United States, *Let Me Fix You a Plate* describes a biracial family that vacations in the mountains of West Virginia to visit Mamaw and Papaw, and then drives south to spend time with Abuelo y Abuela in Florida. At Mamaw’s house the family enjoys sausages, blackberry jam on toast, vanilla waffle cookies, and banana pudding. In Abuela’s kitchen the family shares tostones, arroz, arepas, flan, and queso blanco.

The last two picturebooks introduce the idea that food can lead to adventures! For example, in *Juna’s Jar*, “Juna’s family always had a large jar of kimchi in their fridge.” Once the jar is empty, Juna uses it to inquire about the natural world with her best friend Hector. When Hector moves away, she relies on her older brother Minho and her empty jar to learn a way to remember Hector, while also opening her heart to new friends. Likewise, Luli, in *Luli and the Language of Tea*, discovers that while none of her preschool peers share the same language, they all can talk, play,

share, drink tea... and eat cookies! While this last title elicits conversations around food and biculturalism, the playful tone of the written and visual text suggests to us that the children see the tea party as an opportunity for adventure.

Please consider submitting a review for our future issues. The editors welcome reviews of children's or young adult books that highlight intercultural understanding and global perspectives around these themes:

Volume 16, Issue 1 – Open theme (Fall 2023) – submission deadline: September 30, 2023. The editors welcome reviews of global or multicultural children's or young adult books published within the last three years that highlight intercultural understanding and global perspectives.

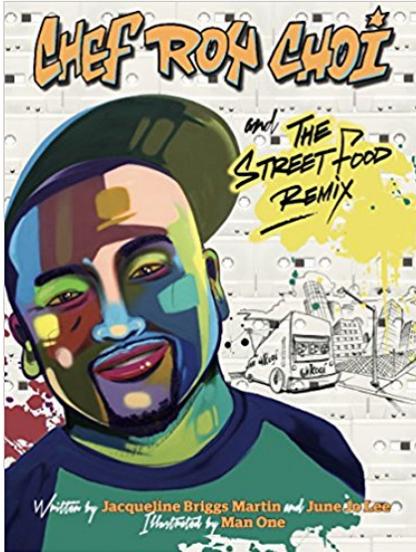
Volume 16, Issue 2 – Themed issue on multicultural or global biographies, autobiographies, memoirs and/or fictionalized biographies (Winter 2023) – submission deadline November 15, 2023. The editors welcome reviews of global or multicultural children's or young adult books published within the last three years that highlight multicultural or global biographies, autobiographies, memoirs and/or fictionalized biographies.

María V. Acevedo-Aquino and Susan Corapi, Co-editors

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Chef Roy Choi and the Street Food Remix / El chef Roy Choi y su remix de la comida callejera

Written by Jacqueline Briggs Martin and June Jo Lee

Illustrated by Man One

Readers to Eaters Books, 2017, 32 pp (unpaged)

ISBN: 978-0983661597 (English)

ISBN: 978-1735152219 (Spanish, 2022)

This picturebook biography is a feast bursting with flavor—in the person of Roy Choi, the food he creates, and innovative illustrations that capture the diverse people of Los Angeles. Chef Roy Choi’s mixing of food traditions—Korean and Mexican—serves as an acknowledgement of the strength of diversity in the community and as an invitation to cross perceived cultural barriers.

Born in Seoul, Korea, Roy Choi’s family immigrated to Los Angeles when Roy was just two years old. His mom sold her homemade kimchi to friends before his family opened the Silver Garden restaurant. As he was growing up, Roy was around the kitchen and in booth #1 where the family gathered at 3:00 p.m. to make dumplings. “Family together, making food, Roy’s best good time.” Roy sampled all of the culinary delights L.A. had to offer, but he loved his mom’s cooking the best.

After high school, Roy Choi watched a cooking show that set him on the path to attend cooking school and become a chef. At first, he worked in fancy restaurants, but learned that the environment wasn’t right for him. His friend had the idea to open a taco truck and Roy had the idea of mixing Korean and Mexican cuisine. He applied “sohn-maash,” which he defines as “the love and cooking talent that Korean mothers and grandmothers mix into their homemade foods.” His street food remix, sold from Kogi trucks, included barbecued Korean short ribs and slaw on corn tortillas with his “awesome” sauce. Choi called it “Los Angeles on a plate.”

It took perseverance and hustling with public relations for Roy Choi and his business partner to convince some of their neighbors that Korean guys could “do tacos.” But in time, “Roy saw that food was like good music, bringing people together and making smiles.” Choi became famous for his Kogi tacos and expanded the business to offer street food in other L.A. neighborhoods.

From the ramen noodle endpapers to Roy’s face depicted with intense concentration and the joyful smiles of the diverse characters in this book, Man One adds richness to the recipe. His background as a graffiti artist shines through in the stylized street scenes that include silhouettes as well as splashes of color. Table tops covered with food surrounded by people sharing it depicted from above furthers the theme of communities coming together through sharing food.

This book is part of the “Food Heroes” series published by Readers to Eaters. Korean words and food names are explained in pull quotes on the pages where they first appear. There are also a few brief recipes presented in this way. This feature helps readers of all backgrounds understand the roots of chef Roy Choi’s food truck cuisine and how he developed it to expand his customers’ culinary tastes. The book also includes the authors’ and illustrator’s notes and biographies and a bibliography of resources.

Chef Roy Choi and the Street Food Remix has earned a great deal of recognition, including Sibert and Orbis Pictus Honor Book awards and the American Library Association and National Council for the Social Studies notable awards.

This book can be paired with picturebooks that connect food and broader aspects of culture. Told with cats and mice characters, *Chato's Kitchen* written by Gary Soto and illustrated by Susan Guevara (1995) focuses on food and community relationships in East L.A. Set in a Mexican-American border town, *¡Vamos! Let's Go Eat* (2020), *¡Vamos! Let's Go to the Market* (2019), and *¡Vamos! Let's Cross the Bridge* (2021) are written and illustrated by Raúl the Third and are younger child-friendly graphic novel picturebooks that portray Mexican culture and the Spanish language. (There are six books in the *World of ¡Vamos!* series.) Readers may enjoy studying the art in these picturebooks alongside Man One's work. Other food-focused book pairings could include *Farmer Will Allen and the Growing Table* (2016) and *Alice Waters and the Trip to Delicious* (2014), two other books from the "Food Heroes" series written by Jacqueline Briggs Martin, as well as other titles in this WOW Review issue.

In their note, co-authors Jacqueline Briggs Martin (<https://jacquelinebriggsmartin.com/>) and June Jo Lee (<https://foodethnographer.com/>) shared their collaboration and what each of them brought to the table. Martin wrote that she connected with Choi's life choices and commitment to bringing good food to everyday people. Martin, who has written other books in this series, values the cultural knowledge and experience Lee brought to this work. As a South Korean immigrant child, Lee shared Roy Choi's feelings of being an outsider and noted that during her childhood the strong flavors of Korean food "created a fence between 'us' and 'them.'" A food ethnographer, Lee admires Choi for connecting people with each other in the streets and neighborhoods of Los Angeles.

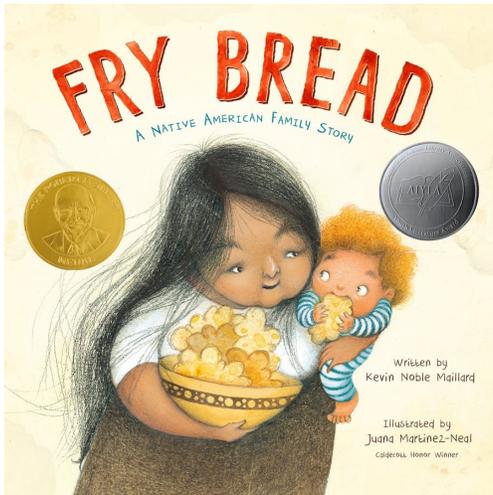
For illustrator Man One (<https://manone.com/>) the goal of making graffiti art is to make the city—and this book—more beautiful and colorful. On the verso of the title page, his art for the book is described in this way: "The art was created in separate layers. Most of the backgrounds were first spray painted onto a large canvas, then photographed. The characters and detailed drawings were created in pencil, then 'inked' digitally on the computer, where all parts were then assembled." In his note, Man One thanked Roy Choi for being one of the sponsors of Graffiti Spirits, his 2009 solo exhibition.

Judi Moreillon, Tucson, Arizona

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Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story

Written by Kevin Noble Maillard

Illustrated by Juana Martinez-Neal

Roaring Book Press, 2019, 40 pp (unpaged)

ISBN: 978-1626727465

The title says it all: making and eating fry bread is ultimately about family, both local and extended. *Fry Bread* is a lyrical poem that celebrates what making and eating fry bread does for members of an Indigenous community. Each stanza is part of a double-page spread and starts with an echo-like statement about the bread:

Fry bread is food
Fry bread is shape
Fry bread is sound
Fry bread is color
Fry bread is flavor
Fry bread is time
Fry bread is art
Fry bread is history
Fry bread is place
Fry bread is nation
Fry bread is everything
Fry bread is us
Fry bread is you

Each statement is followed by rich descriptors that make reading the poem a sensory and evocative experience. It ties creating and eating fry bread to a Seminole family, but then the notion of family ripples out in widening circles, embracing the diversity that is represented in Indigenous traditions around fry bread: how it is made, who makes it, and the history behind it. It is a book that becomes richer each time it is read!

The extensive back matter turns the poem into an information book. It begins with the author's own Seminole family recipe for fry bread, then he amplifies each statement with notes, explaining the diversity inherent in each characteristic. For example, in "fry bread is shape," he explains how different families shape the fry bread by dropping it in hot fat by spoonfuls, or by rolling it out into flat round shapes before frying it. The stanzas celebrate the diversity in the way fry bread is created (e.g., ingredients), and how it is eaten (with beans, soup, sugar, honey). After the first five stanzas about the fry bread itself, Kevin Maillard expands the discussion by addressing when it is eaten (on regular days or special days), and who in a family passes on traditions. He also explains how fry bread was born out of adversity when Indigenous tribes were forced to vacate their traditional lands and ways of life. Ancestors had to adapt to new agricultural practices and plants in addition to using government

food rations. So cooks were creative, using what was available to them to feed their families. Ultimately, this poem is about diversity: the how, why, when fry bread is created and eaten with family across North American Indigenous tribes and (listed on the end pages). Whether fry bread is made with corn or wheat flour, fried in lard or coconut oil, rolled out or dropped in the fat by spoonfuls, everyone has a traditional way of making fry bread that is steeped in practices passed down from generation to generation.

The illustrations are rendered in acrylics, colored pencils, and graphite on textured paper with Juana Martinez Neal's signature curvy shapes. Big-eyed enthusiastic children watch as grandparents and parents mix and shape the dough, fry it and serve it to a hungry family group. Significantly, Martinez-Neal added in colors and patterns that represent the Seminole heritage of author Kevin Maillard. The illustrations also depict the diversity in skin tones of Seminole peoples who enjoy making and eating fry bread.

The book has won many awards: the 2020 Robert F. Sibert Award, an honor book by the American Indian Youth Literature Award, a Charlotte Zolotow honor book and a Charlotte Huck recommended book.

There are many outstanding titles that would pair well with this book (e.g., books profiling cultural foods), but the titles that follow emphasize the way food creates community. Grace Lin (1999) wrote and illustrated *The Ugly Vegetables* based on her own childhood, recording the discontent she felt as her mother's garden patch looked very different from the neighbors. Only after they harvested and cooked the Chinese vegetables into an aromatic soup that drew their neighbors to the door, does Grace realize how special it is to enjoy and share diverse foods and plants. In a similar story, Oga Mora (2018) tells the story in *Thank You, Omu!* of a grandmother cooking and sharing her pot of West African soup with all the neighbors in her apartment building after the delicious odors circulate in the hallways! Finally, Ilima Loomis and Kenard Pak (2022) use a cumulative poem in *'Ohana Means Family* to describe an Hawaiian family growing Kalo plants on their land that they will use to make poi for the luau at which they are joined by their ohana, i.e., their extended family and friends. Similar to *Fry Bread*, the book illustrates and discusses the way kalo is part of Native Hawaiian history and references the wind that carries the stories from generation to generation.

Kevin Noble Maillard is an enrolled member of the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma. He is also a professor of law at Fordham University in New York City, and writes for the New York Times and The Atlantic on a wide variety of topics including issues of race, laws, and food! *Fry Bread* is his first title for children. More information about him can be found on his website (<https://www.kevinmaillard.com/>).

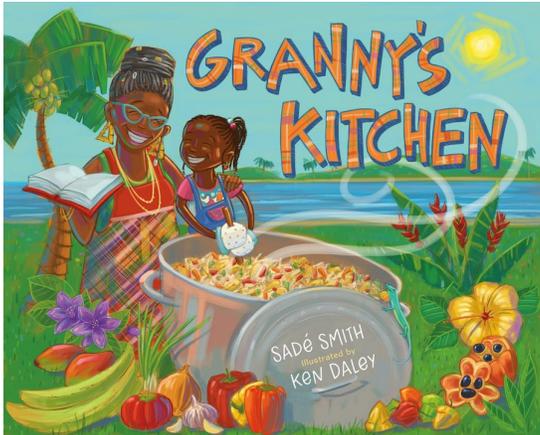
Juana Martinez Neal is a Peruvian-born author/illustrator currently living in Connecticut! She has written and/or illustrated many award-winning titles including *Alma and How She Got Her Name* (2018), winner of a Caldecott honor, and *La Princesa and the Pea*, written by Susan Middleton Elya (2017) and winner of the Pura Belpré award. More information can be found on her website (<https://juanamartinezneal.com/>).

Susan Corapi, Trinity International University

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Granny's Kitchen: A Jamaican Story of Food and Family

Written by Sadé Smith

Illustrated by Ken Daley

Feiwei & Friends, 2022, 32 pp (unpaged)

ISBN: 978-1250806338

Shelley-Ann lives with her grandmother on the sunny beautiful island of Jamaica. Her grandmother is a wonderful cook of foods based on Jamaican traditions—dumplings, ackee, saltfish, and plantains. When Shelley-Ann decides to try her hand at making these foods, nothing turns out right.

Even though her grandmother reassures her, Shelley-Ann gives up. One day when her grandmother is too tired to cook, Shelley-Ann gives cooking another try and provides her grandmother with a perfect Jamaican breakfast.

This warm, inviting story is illustrated with vibrant, sun-soaked artwork that fits the Jamaican setting. The digital illustrations capture the bright greens and blues of the Jamaican countryside and the pinks of Granny's kitchen. They also depict the close relationship between Shelley-Ann and her grandmother and their facial expressions of discouragement and happiness. The book ends with recipes for the Jamaican dishes that Shelley-Ann learns to cook, encouraging readers to also give the recipes a try. The story of a determined girl and her love for her grandmother and Jamaican food is full of warmth and connection.

Books to pair with this picturebook include books set in Jamaica, such as *Marley and the Family Band* by Cedella Marley (2022), *A Likkle Miss Lou: How Jamaican Poet Louise Bennett Coverly Found Her Voice* by Nadia Hohn (2019), and *J is for Jamaica* by Benjamin Zephaniah (2009). Books about cooking and food with family members would also make great pairings, such as *Plátanos are Love* by Alyssa Reynoso-Morris (2023), *Abuelita and I Make Flan* by Adriana Hernandez Bergstrom (2022), and *Black-Eyed Peas and Hoghead Cheese* by Glenda Armand (2022).

Sadé Smith (<https://sadetsmith.com/>) is from Toronto, Ontario and is of Jamaican heritage. Her books often involve food and recipes with colorful illustrations to capture the vibrancy and beauty of the Caribbean islands. *Granny's Kitchen* is her debut picturebook. Her second book is *Julie and the Mango Tree*, illustrated by Sayada Ramdial (2023). Sadé is also a design technologist who practices the skilled trades of carpentry, flooring, and home renovations. She holds degrees in interior design, architectural technology, creative book publishing, and business marketing. She loves the beach and enjoys adventuring with her two boys and their dog Ziggy. She is passionate about literature and writing books with diverse representation for young readers.

Ken Daley was born in Cambridge, Ontario to parents who emigrated from Dominica, West Indies. He has exhibited his artwork in Canada, the U.S. and the Caribbean with his work featured in children's books, print publications, and on television. He draws inspiration from his African-Caribbean roots, his life experiences, and his encounters with people and cultures. He explores art

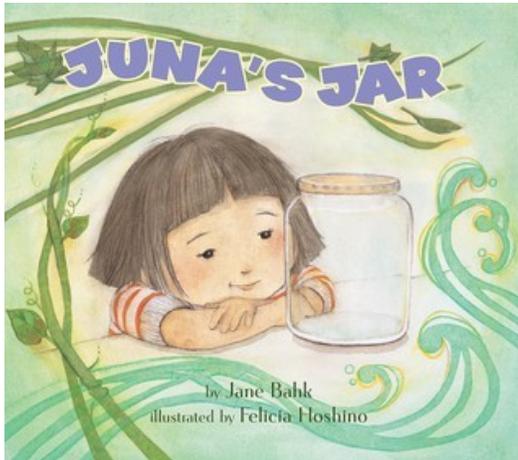
through different styles and materials, including oil, acrylic, ceramic tiles, wood, nails and found materials. His work is an explosion of color and emotion. He had illustrated picturebooks related to *the Caribbean*, including *Auntie Luce's Paintings* by Francie Latour (2018), *A Feast for Joseph* by Terry Farish (2021), *Joseph's Big Ride* by Terry Farish (2016), and *The Legend of the Spirit Serpent* by Adaiyah Sanford (2022).

Kathy G. Short, University of Arizona

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Juna's Jar / El frasco de Juna

Written by Jane Bahk

Illustrated by Felicia Hoshino

Lee & Low Books, 2015, 32 pp (unpaged)

ISBN: 978-1620148310 (English)

ISBN: 978-1643796192 (Spanish, 2022)

"Juna's jar was empty again. (n.p)."

Juna loves to take her empty kimchi jar on adventures. Sometimes she and her best friend Hector let plants and small insects live inside the empty kimchi jar. Afterwards, they

release the resident of the jar. One morning, Juna receives the news that her best friend has moved far away. When Juna sadly returns home, her older brother Minhoo tries to cheer her up and takes his younger sister to Mr. Lee's pet shop. Minhoo buys a small fish for Juna to raise in her empty jar. When her fish grows too big to reside in the jar, Juna puts it in an aquarium with Minhoo's help. Afterwards, Minhoo gives his younger sister a small bean plant he had grown for his science class, and they carefully plant it in her empty jar. That night, Juna climbs down the plant and enters a rainforest to look for Hector. During her journey, Juna encounters various animals and she wishes Hector was with her because he knows a lot about them. Eventually, the plant grows too big for Juna's jar so Minhoo helps her move it into a large pot.

With the empty kimchi jar, the siblings create a home for a cricket they found at the park. When everyone is asleep that evening, the cricket takes Juna for a ride, and they fly through the evening sky together until they land on the window sill of a big house. In that moment Juna finds Hector and notices that he has kept a kimchi jar she had given him on his bedside table. She watches him through the window and whispers goodbye before she returns home by riding on the cricket's back. Later, Minhoo and Juna release the cricket because it grows too big. Juna's jar becomes empty once again. When Juna wonders what to put next in her container, a girl with a green inch worm on her arm asks about placing the insect in Juna's jar. The story ends with Juna happily holding out her empty kimchi jar towards the girl.

With regards to cultural authenticity, there are several written and visual cues that portray Juna and her brother as Asians, specifically Koreans or Korean Americans. For example, their names, facial attributes, and their family's enjoyment of kimchi. Additionally, Juna's interaction with nature is somewhat similar to Korean traditional folktales in ways that animals and insects offer their assistance to return the kindness they received from the protagonist for taking care of them in her jar. There are also Korean cultural elements embedded in the text, especially in the repeated sentence, "Juna's jar was empty again" because there is a Korean philosophy that one is able to gain when there is nothing. Likewise, letting go creates room for something new, and this cycle in life is presented through the illustrations of the round jar. Thus, this sentence provides hints to the readers that the empty jar will lead Juna to a new adventure. Both texts and illustrations from the story vividly convey the adventures Juna experienced. They also portray Juna's longing to be with her best friend Hector. The gentle watercolor illustrations present the characters' expressions and emotions smoothly, even for the animals in this story.

In addition, Juna’s friendship with Hector appears to be interracial as Juna and Hector’s grandmothers greet each other in Spanish. However, there is not enough information about how Juna and Hector developed their friendship, including whether or not they may speak a language other than English.

Juna’s Jar would make a great pair with *Memory Jars* by Vera Brosgol (2021) and *Idea Jar* by Adam Lehrhaupt (2018). Additionally, *The Name Jar* by Yangsook Choi (2003), *Kindness Snippet Jar* by Diane Alber (2019), and *The Blessings Jar: A Story About Being Thankful* by Colleen Coble (2013) would also make excellent additions. With the use of the jar as a theme, educators, parents, and students would be able to engage in discussions about how this universal container is used across various cultures. Moreover, they could share stories together and create ways to utilize jars for fun learning activities.

The acclaimed Korean American children’s book author Jane Bahk (a.k.a. Jane Park), is an award-winning media producer and a former school teacher who lives with her family in the San Francisco Bay Area. Her inspiration to write *Juna’s Jar* came from her own fond memories of playing with empty kimchi jars. She especially likes good adventures that involve her kids and their jars. More information about the works by Jane Park can be found online at her website (<https://janeparkbooks.com/>).

The Japanese American illustrator, Felicia Hoshino, was born in San Francisco, California where she continues to live with her family. She earned a BFA in illustration at California College of the Arts and is an award-winning illustrator and graphic designer. She enjoys cooking with her husband and decorating their house walls with art that their daughter and son create. Additional information about Felicia Hoshino can be found online at her website (<https://felishino.com/>).

Hyunjung Lee, University of Arizona

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Let Me Fix You a Plate: A Tale of Two Kitchens

Written & Illustrated by Elizabeth Lilly

Neal Porter Books, 2021, 40 pp

ISBN: 978-0823443253



As a child of Greek and Mexican descent, the exploration of two distinct cultures, American and Colombian in *Let Me Fix You a Plate: A Tale of Two Kitchens*, especially resonated with me due to my own Greek and Mexican heritage.

Readers follow along as a young girl travels with her parents and two sisters first to her father's family house in the mountains of West Virginia, and then her mother's family house in the tropical heat of Florida. Readers observe the protagonist and her family packing up their belongings for

the trip, with the comic addition of an elephant atop a pile of clothes in one suitcase.

The main character sets the scene for their departure, saying that they always leave once a year on a Friday night. After driving for hours and hours, they arrive at Mamaw and Papaw's home in the mountains of West Virginia where they are greeted warmly at the door and offered a plate of food. In the morning they have sausage and toast with blackberry jam, while her father and Papaw drink coffee from two identical cups. Later, the girl and her sisters help their Mamaw make banana pudding in the kitchen. The family's journey continues south to Abuela and Abuelo's home in Florida, where they are also offered food once they arrive. There are many family members conversing with one another in Spanish and the setting is more animated in contrast to Mamaw and Papaw's place. The girl picks oranges off trees, makes arepas, eats crunchy tostones, and watches her parents dance and salsa the night away. Finally, it's time for her and her family to go back home. As they drive back, she reflects on her time spent at each residence and all the types of food and culture she experienced. No matter what culture, her family members are tight knit and have much love for one another. The story ends with the girl and her sisters falling asleep in their individual beds at their own house.

Lilly's pen and ink drawings are vividly gestural with a light line quality akin to illustrator Jules Feiffer, and they convey a wide range of emotions in each scene and family home. Most of the illustrations take up the whole page, but there are some that are contained within graphic panels on a page, such as when the girl's Abuelo is teaching her words in Spanish, or when they are saying goodbye to her Abuela (readers can see her in the car looking out the window). The colors effectively show the warmth and love between the families, as well as the deliciously rich selection of food available to eat in both kitchens.

Educators can use *Let Me Fix You a Plate* in the classroom to help students increase their vocabulary and knowledge of different cuisines and reflect and discuss their own family's cultural traditions. To expand on these lessons, this text would pair well with *Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story* written by Kevin Noble Maillard and illustrated by Juana Martinez-Neal (2019) and *Dumpling Day* written by Meera Sriram and illustrated by Inés de Antuñano (2021), which both highlight the diversity and uniqueness of food and family.

In addition to being an author and illustrator, Elizabeth Lilly is also an animator and educator. She celebrates her identity as a lesbian, biracial Colombian Latina and expresses the joy of finding herself in her work. Her first book, *Geraldine*, featuring an anthropomorphic girl giraffe trying to find her place in a new school with actual humans, was published in 2018 by Roaring Brook Press. She has received starred reviews in Kirkus, Publisher's Weekly, and School Library Journal, and her work has been honored and won numerous awards including the 2018 Junior Library Guild (JLG) selection, the Charlotte Zolotow Honor for picturebook writing, and the 2021 list of ALA Notable books. Lilly currently lives in Takoma Park, Maryland with her partner and their dog, Ponyo. Her work can be further explored on her website (<https://www.elizabeth-lilly.com/about>).

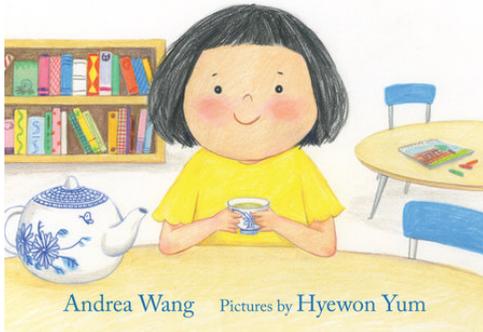
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Luli
and the Language of Tea



Luli and the Language of Tea

Written by Andrea Wang
Illustrated by Hyewon Yum
Neal Porter Books, 2022, 40 pp
ISBN: 978-0823446148

In the opening spread of *Luli and the Language of Tea*, young children are saying goodbye to their parents, then the adults walk into their English lessons and the children into childcare. Luli enters her classroom, a quiet space where none of the children speak a common language and don't seem to play or interact with each other. On this day, however, Luli comes prepared. Following a hand-drawn plan previously shared with

her teacher, she pulls out a thermos, cups, a teapot with tea and begins to fill the cups for her classmates. Once she has filled her first cup, she calls out "Cha!" in Chinese and the other children quickly begin to notice and respond with curiosity using the word for tea in each of their home languages: Russian, Hindi, Turkish, Persian, Arabic, Spanish, German, Swahili and Portuguese. As each child shares, the similarities across languages become evident. When the teapot empties just as Luli is filling the last cup for herself, her classmates—now gathered around the table together—each contribute a little of their own tea to Luli's cup to ensure that she is able to join in. In this simple act of sharing tea, the classroom transforms from a quiet solitary space into one full of love, laughter and connection.

In writing this translingual book, Andrea Wang drew upon her own experiences as a child of Chinese immigrants, noting that seeking out common bonds was often at the heart of trying to communicate. Her father taught English as a Second Language (ESL) classes and students from many countries visited her childhood home where they were always offered tea and snacks. Andrea became intrigued that so many languages had a similar sounding word for tea and dove more deeply into this research to write *Luli and the Language of Tea* (Marshall, n.d.)

Illustrator Hyewon Yum, born and raised in South Korea, attended ESL classes in the U.S. as an adult and drew from her own memories of this time and what it felt like to find similarities with her classmates across perceived language barriers and age differences. Her illustrations, drawn with colored pencils, offer many small details in the children's expressions that capture the surprise, wonder, and ultimately joy that is found in connection with one another. In the back of the book, each child from the story shares how they drink tea in their own country of origin. A map shows the location of these countries, and the endpapers offer exquisitely drawn teacups to highlight yet another example of difference as beautiful.

The simple text and warm illustrations work together to illustrate the process of true intercultural connection which honors both difference and similarity. In the early pages, the characters' bodies depict an inward focus, heads down, shoulders slumped. As Luli offers the tea in her own unique language, she opens the possibility for others to do the same and as a result, claiming their own identity in this shared space. Across the pages, as children use their home languages, their bodies

straighten, their faces turn upward and ultimately, they lean into one another, connected by the similarities within their differences.

Significant to this book are the ways that language is used throughout the text. Both Luli’s initial exclamation of “Cha!” and each child’s response is written first in the orthography of the language they are speaking, followed by an English pronunciation guide. However, an English translation is not offered, leaving the reader—like the children in the story—to draw upon a variety of context clues to derive the meaning. *Luli and the Language of Tea* offers a unique perspective on the power of language to connect. Rather than a focus on learning and using each other’s languages as a first step of connection, this book centers young children and their agency in connecting to others through a loud and proud declaration of their own individual home languages.

Luli and the Language of Tea could be paired with other picture books about finding connection through language, both verbal and visual, such as *Alone Like Me* by Rebecca Evans (2022) and *Drawn Together* by Minh Lê (2018). *Dumplings for Lili* by Melissa Iwai (2021) could also be read as a companion text to explore similarities, differences and connections through food. To create opportunities for inquiries about both familiar and unfamiliar languages, a text set could be built by adding books such as *Gibberish* by Young Vo (2022), *A is for Bee: An Alphabet Book in Translation* by Ellen Heck (2022), *Du Iz Tak* by Carson Ellis (2016) and *Where’s Halmoni* by Julie Kim (2017).

Andrea Wang’s work explores culture, creative thinking and identity. She is also the author of *Watercress* (2021), which won the Asian/Pacific American Award for Literature for Picture Book, Caldecott Medal, and Newbery Honor. Her other books have also received awards and starred reviews. Her work can be explored on her website (<https://andreyawang.com/>).

Hyewon Yum is an author and illustrator whose books *Last Night* (2008), *There Are No Scary Wolves* (2010) and *Mom, It’s my first day of Kindergarten!* (2012) have won numerous awards including the Golden Kite, Ezra Jack Keats New Illustrator, and Kirkus Reviews Best Book of the Year. Visit her website (<https://www.hyewonyum.com/>) to inquire more about her work.

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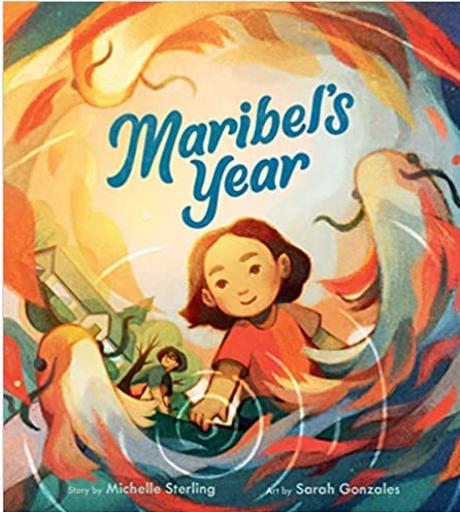
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Maribel's Year

Written by Michelle Sterling
Illustrated by Sarah Gonzales
Katherine Tegen Books, 2023, 40 pp
ISBN: 978-0063114357

Maribel's Year is the story of a young Filipina girl who moves to the United States with her mother but, unfortunately, without her father. Not only is Maribel in a new country, but she endures separation from her father, who must remain in the Philippines for another year. When Maribel and her mother first appear outside their new home during the frosty winter, Maribel frowns angrily. Two pages later, she looks crestfallen from missing her family and friends in the Philippines. At first,

Maribel reminisces about carabao milk and big family meals. Then, however, she begins to warm up when a friendly classmate shares sour candy with her for Valentine's Day.

Months pass, and June sunshine marks the beginning of summer. Seen on an outing at the beach with friends, Maribel and Mama pack their picnic basket with cold treats like orange sherbet, fresh fruit, chips, and saltwater taffy. They also blend a milkshake my Mindanao-born mother sometimes craves—an avocado shake! Soon after, there is dried mango and tamarind from Lolo's (grandfather's) farm, along with a letter from Papa. Then, Maribel goes berry-picking with her friend from school, which evokes the nostalgia of drinking buko juice, a drink made from young coconuts, with Papa.

More time passes, and autumn leaves signal the season of picking apples, baking pumpkin pie, carving Jack-o-lanterns, and roasting pumpkin seeds. By partaking in the festivities, Maribel shows that she is embracing her new home and incorporating elements of her favorite foods and customs from the Philippines. For example, Mama and Maribel share their first Thanksgiving with turkey, gravy, and ube pie. Ube is a purple yam popular in Filipino cuisine and especially famous in desserts. This intermingling of traditional food expresses a love for their homeland and appreciation of their new home. When Mama and Maribel reunite with Papa, it is a snowy winter again, but they feel at home now.

Maribel's Year is luminous and dreamlike with its penciled illustrations and rich, digitally rendered colors that glow in deep shades of yellows, oranges, reds, and greens. The art style fits the writing and smoothly expresses the story with heart. The vivid imagery employs all senses, drawing on memories of temperature, texture, flavor, sound, and seasonal changes. Colorful swirls of Tagalog words and their English counterparts create a visualization of the “foggy soup of strange words” (p. 5) that make spelling in English difficult. Maribel and her parents present as Filipinos in terms of appearance because of their dark hair and tan skin. In addition, her school is diverse in its student representation.

There is a gap in depictions of Filipino American experiences within children's literature. Based on catalog searches from large public libraries, there has been a lack of authentic representation of

Filipinos/Filipino Americans in picturebooks and graphic novels for young readers. However, *Maribel's Year* is the high-quality, beautifully illustrated children's story I have longed for as a fellow Filipina American who grew up in Southern California. I have been searching for mirrors all my life, and it is wonderful to witness the recognition and appreciation of more Filipino diaspora voices filling this need for future generations.

Other recent Filipino picturebooks include *Sari-Sari Summers* by Lynnor Bontigao (2023) and *Holding On* by Sophia N. Lee and Isabel Roxas (2022). These are heartwarming picturebooks by Filipina creators about girls and grandmothers bonding over food, music, and Tagalog while visiting each other in the Philippines.

Maribel's Year is a creation by and about Filipinas. Michelle Sterling is a Filipina American author, photographer, speech-language pathologist, and children's literature blogger on her website (<http://averyandaugustine.com/>). Sterling's mother and father immigrated from Ilocos Sur and Manila, respectively. She lives with her family in Southern California, where she was born and raised (Aquino, 2021).

The talented illustrator, Sarah Gonzales, is Filipina Canadian. A child of Philippine expatriates, she was born in Saudi Arabia and raised in Alberta (HarperStacks, 2023). *Maribel's Year* marks her debut as a picturebook illustrator. To view more of Sarah's artwork, visit her website (<http://sgonzalesart.com/>).

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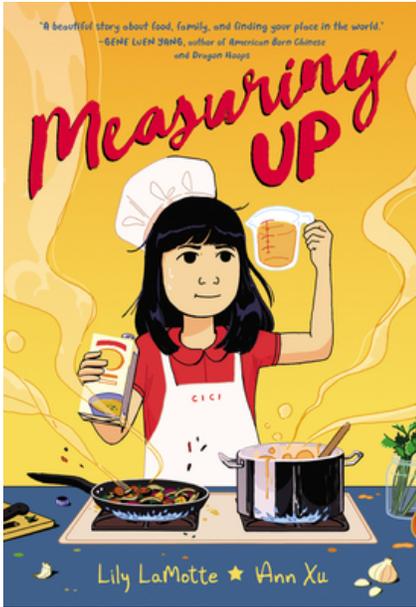
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Measuring Up

Written by Lily LaMotte
Illustrated by Ann Xu
HarperAlley, 2020, 205 pp
ISBN: 978-0062973863

In this graphic novel, a twelve-year-old girl Cici, who has moved from Taiwan to Seattle with her parents, competes in a cooking contest and discovers herself as both Taiwanese and American. The novel shows how food bridges and connects immigrants' former and new sense of identity. She always cooked with her A-má in Taiwan, but A-má cannot come to Seattle with her. Cici enters a cooking contest to win an award to buy an airplane ticket for her A-má to come to Seattle for her 70th birthday. Cici cooks American food in the first half of the contest because she teams up with Miranda, but in the second half they cook separately.

When Cici is told the special required ingredient for the final half is lavender, she does not know what to do. Then, she remembers how A-má used lavender for some of her recipes, and decides to cook a Taiwanese rice dish, yoo-bung, with a twist. Cici wins the contest. When her A-má comes, Cici shows her own special spice, which, unlike A-má's, includes lavender. Her special mix represents herself as both Taiwanese and American. Thus, cooking has helped her to combine two cultures within herself.

Measuring Up shows that food is a way to make friends from diverse backgrounds, and reunite people. When Cici first brings Taiwanese food (pickled cucumber) to school for lunch, some boys laugh at her and think she eats worms. Two girls approach Cici, explaining how these boys are always mischievous. Cici makes friends with the girls, and they trade desserts. During the contest, Cici also uses a Taiwanese cooking method to customize an Italian dish by adding chicken livers to make it taste stronger, which makes her team win the contest.

The drawing style of the characters is minimalist in this graphic novel, representing happiness with crescent moon eyes when Cici's friends enjoy the food. The graphics are colored cartoons with high intensity which create "vibrancy, warmth, and familiarity" (Painter et al., 2013, p. 36). The images shown in the book represent authentic Taiwanese food such as dumpling, shaved rice, and minced pork over rice.

The story in the book is well written and integrates Asian cultural values like high expectations from parents, going to market and living with grandparents. This graphic novel also includes some cultural conflict between old and new generations. For example, A-má believes that "tables of three and eight are lucky numbers for the going-away party" (p. 12), but Cici's dad does not believe in numerology. This book creates a window into values that represent the Taiwanese culture.

Measuring Up could be paired with another graphic novel around desserts: *Yummy: A History of Dessert* written by Victoria Grace Elliott (2021). Elliot's book is more informative because it shows the history of dessert from around the world, but it does not have an independent storyline of

friendship and family like *Measuring Up*. Another pair could be *Bloom* by Kevin Panetta and illustrated by Savanna Ganucheau (2019), an Asian-American graphic novel that tells the story of how two gay characters fall in love as they bake bread together.

Lily LaMotte earned a Master of Fine Arts in Writing for Children and Young Adults at Hamline University. She is an Asian American of Taiwanese descent who lives in Washington. Visit her website (<https://lilylamotte.com/>) to learn more about her work.

Ann Xu is from San Jose, CA. She is an Ignatz-nominated cartoonist and illustrator who is Chinese American. She received a Bachelor of Fine Arts in illustration from the Maryland Institute College of Art. Visit her website (<https://annxu.cargo.site/>) to learn more about her work.

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